Book Introduction, 1st draft, Feb 20, 16

I was born and brought up as an introvert child, almost a day dreamer. Somewhat clumsy in big movements, although accurate on the fine ones.
I was born with an insatiable curiosity, but a passive one. Not the one which leads you to the top of a tree or the playing ground, but the one which makes you a concentrated observer and an avid/obsessive reader.

Until I reached 20, no one, myself included, would guess he sees a future Special Forces Unit commander, an Army future General, a political Head of State, not to mention a statesman.

I was born on the darkest moment, probably, of the 20th century. Just 65 days earlier the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Three weeks before I was born

Heydrich, Himmler and Eichmann among others, met in Villa Wansee, to plan, then execute, the “Final Solution” of the Jewish problem.
The battle for Stalingrad raged high in the East. Rommel stood triumphant in Al Alamein, at the gates of Egypt.
In Palestine, leaders of the budding Jewish entity discussed apocalyptic scenarios, if Germans will conquer it.
On the same day, Feb 12, 1942, Yair Stern, the head of Lehi, tiny but aggressive underground, was murdered by the British Investigative Police.
Young Yitzhak Yezernitzki (later, Shamir), a future Prime Minister, took command.

No one would have dared then to guess what might follow. But, as we said decades later, during our own battles: ‘The darkest moment, is just before dawn’.

It so happened that when I was three, at an immense price for the world and the Jewish people, WW II was over.
Within Just two and half more years Israel, was born, with international blessing, amidst a war for its very survival, against all neighboring armies. B.G. declared it when his closest advisers, as well as Former five-stars General George C. Marshall, at the State Department were deeply worried we are going to be defeated. At a painful price for the newly born and deep suffering for all involved, we won.

I was 7 by now. Watching with kid's eyes, wide open, the unfolding drama. No wonder that my early impression of the world I'd been born into, an impression which crystalized in years to come into a 'self evident' belief, was: ' Well, it is not a picnic. But *nothing* is impossible. Individual, as well as collective will power- *is* what matters'.

I was born in a Kibbutz, the avant-garde of Zionism. The Kibbutz was really a daring experiment. Started from scratch. No previous precedents. Communal pioneers society, born out of tough necessities of a colonizing movement, but embedded into layers of idealist, almost utopian thoughts of elating the individual beyond human weaknesses. Life standards were extremely modest and self-control and discipline, an expected norm.

{It succeeded for decades, much more than many expected it to. It heavily contributed to shape the Zionist project physical and behavioral borders, both farming, fighting or shouldering any other burden, as the need rose.}

At early age, through trips, rituals, ceremonies etc. a subtle message was conveyed to us, that we are the carriers

of a dream, which just came true. We have to carry it on. It worked. Many of us did.

{Being a child in a Kibbutz was not always easy for all, but I enjoyed a warm, affirming and empowering childhood, guided by my parents and few other adults. I never regretted it.}

I had a warm and empowering childhood. But with the growingly critical eye of a teenager I saw the gaps between ideals and behavior, and realized that utopia and reality do not go together. Moreover, be it for luck, or the absence of it, it dawned on me that *real life* happened elsewhere. Unlike many other Kibbutzim, nothing important ever happened in MH, my Kibbutz.

A conclusion gradually emerged in me, into a second belief: 'If you got the drive to really participate in the unfolding

Israeli adventure, you have to go for it. Actively and in person'.

Zionism itself was a daring experiment. Started from scratch. No previous precedents. A dream of a sort, [EB. Quote Herzl (?).] An almost utopian salvation plan. It's roots in the extreme distress and deprivation of Jewish life, Millions of them, in Eastern Europe toward the end of 19th century. Western Jews were in much better shape, but moving millions of 'Eastern' Jews to the West was a non starter. In 1895 Dreyfus Affair erupted, and shocked the Jewish world. Theodor Herzl launched his call. " If you will, it won't be a legend'. Execution was slow and more painful than expected. Between 1895 - 1910, the immigration to U.S. counted 1.3 millions. (Not a bad choice in retrospect). Immigration to Palestine, during the same period, counted only 30 thousands. Many of

them left later. But It is this tiny stream, a combination of the most distressed individuals and the most devoted idealists, which changed, irreversibly, Jewish history.

Zionism turned into the most successful national project of the 20th century.
The validity of this statement was not yet clear in the 50's. (And according to some observers has to be re-evaluated, based on its' unintended consequences during the last few decades).
In the early 50's, Zionism already faced head-on, some of its own contradictions.
From day one back in 1896, Zionism perceived itself, to an extent duly so, as a salvation/redemption rescue operation. Emphasizing initiative, rather than passive waiting. Zionism was Secular, progressive, defying the humiliation and servility of the 'Steitl,', taking their fate into *their* hands and proactively step on the *stage of history*.

Connected directly to the biblical legacy of proud, sovereign people living in its ancient homeland. Zionism aspired to transform the “Eastern” Jew into a “Hebraic New”.
But always insisted on Universalism, on joining hands with the most advanced and enlightenment oriented human societies. The vision of becoming a ‘*role model society*’ was an inseparable part of its’ identity.

It never lived up to the slogan: ”A land without a people for a people without a land”. Haim Weizman, Jabotinski and B.G. all understood it. Use of force might become inevitable. It should not be our initiative. And should not be used unless absolutely necessary. Legitimacy, holding the moral high ground, justifying the higher aspirations of Zionism and live in congruence with

enlightenment norms were crucial on the founding fathers' mind.
Young Amos Oz provided a metaphor for it: 'a survivor of a shipwreck is about to drawn, he sees a floating board that was his, once. Now grabbed by another person. Out of no choice (the alternative is to sink /drawn) he also grabs the floating board.
He does not and will not push the other person from the board. But of course, if attacked, he will defend himself.
This metaphor clarified and focused the moral justification for the use of force, as well as its domain of validity. The use of force is there, to ensure your survivability. It blurs its' legitimacy when that's not the case.

In the Kibbutz, we never learned to hate. Each year, few weeks after Passover, there was a day Lag BaOmer when a big bonfires were set all over the country to commemorate the heroism of Bar-

Kochva, a zealots' commander who rebelled against the Roman Empire in 130 BC and was defeated by Hadrian, unprecedented blood bath followed and the end of our presence in the Holy Land for the next 1780 years. The myth of Bar Kochva was needed to re-enact the fighting spirit in the 'people of the book'. However, in the Kibbutz we used to burn a full-size puppet of the worst Zorrer (Bad Guy) of the time. In 45' we burnt Hitler. In 46' Earnst Bevin, the British Colonies Minister, for the 'White Paper" which blocked Jewish survivors from landing on our shores. We never burnt an Arab. In fact, 300 yards from the bonfire place there was an Arab Village Waddi Khawarit, with which we had benign relationship until they quitely left in March 48'. No battle. No one killed. If someone would have asked me at childhood, whom should we hate forever, never forget or give up, I surely would have said: "The Germans !". No

other than the greatest Jew of our generation, (probably of all our history), B.G., was the one who just seven years after WW II, saw “another Germany” and against waves of violent demonstrations, accepted German money to get Israel stronger.

{In 47’, while approaching the Partition Plan of the UN and the recognition of a Jewish State, a bitter feeling was shared by Zionist leaders. The very millions for whom the Project was planned won’t be able to be saved anymore. They perished during the Holocaust. However, during the 48’ war, which was initiated by the Palestinians and the Arab League, and which created the Palestinian refugee problem, a similar Jewish problem was created. 650k Jews left the Arab world, with none of their property, during 48’ and within three years afterwards. *They*, now, turned to be the people to be saved .We never

called them refugees. We called them brothers, we've absorbed them. Not without problems and mistakes. But now they and their offspring are majority of Israelis}

Israel of my teenage years was still weak and vulnerable. Boycotted by many. Isolated diplomatically. Under repeated 'Fedaiyun' terror attacks. Arab neighbors backed by the Soviet Union got modern arms. Without a super power backing, or recognized borders. And tackling a huge challenge of absorbing extra 150% of its population over 4-5 years.

B.G. best described the Israeli challenge in 55': 'In declaring The State, we've climbed on a steep mountain. We do not have the option to stay idle on the slope. Either we climb up to the summit, or will fall down into the abyss'.

It was during those years were I gradually left the 'splendid isolation' of a

contemplative boy, towards more action oriented experiences. And just short of 18, joined the IDF.

After few disappointing starts and half a year spent, I, quite accidentally, found myself joining in The Unit. It was a daring experiment, or a dream. Starting from scratch. No previous precedents. Certain similarities to previous short living units, and a best seller book about the British S.A.S.. The Unit, in 60' was the ultimate *non-regimental* entity any army could have. We hardly wore uniform. Officers would not wear ranks and would be called by their nick -names. The law was just a recommendation. With just two and half dozens of soldiers, it looked like a hybrid of a juvenile delinquency club and an isolated Marshall Tito partisan unit in the Balkans.
It took five years, and a lot of frustration before we went to our first operation.

By that time, in 62, I was already an officer in this Special Forces Unit, named Sayeret Matkal, and led the operation.

This was my first independent formative experience. It was followed by a series of new *'firsts'*, prepared from scratch. No precedents. I learned the potential of free spirit, inspired imagination, authority and responsibility delegation and non-military-like openness, in bringing enthusiasm and results.

Hard work. Team work. Strong emphasize on frontal cortex, not just biceps.

The lessons were personal, direct and clear. They left deep imprint on me: Forward leaning leadership, clarity of vision, readiness to listen, to dare, to take risks. Should come together with cold headed, sober commonsense, attention for details, careful planning, deep training and decisive execution.

Then, ‘ the sky is the limit’. Probably , not even the sky.
I now knew. I can become a man of action, if I chose to.

{The Unit, still exists, is now 55 years older, (an older sister of the US Delta forces and Seal Teams), a National Icon and a pillar of Israeli excellence in military affairs.}

I was not yet decided. By 65’ I truly believed we are heading towards normalcy. I was strongly attracted to science and studying. I left for the Hebrew University. Taking Math and Physics. I was elated. On May 15, 67’, Israels’ 19th Independence Day, the crisis started which led to the ‘six days war’. *History* then, changed direction.

We could see the noose come closer. We learned, the hard way, how lonely we were. Preparations were made for emergency burial of thousands in a public garden in the middle of Tel Aviv. Among civilian, kids included, there was certain smell of a panic. Not among us, or our senior commanders. We were confident that we would win. We did.

When the charged energy erupted, on 0745am, June 5th ,67' things went fast. I started it in Sinai, heard over the radio, already close to the Suez Canal, that we took over Old Jerusalem and the Temple mount. I ended two days later, hundreds of miles to the North, in Quneitra, on the Golan Heights.
Israel, against all perceived odds, won over three Arab modern armies in a shockingly swift knockout. The area under its control grew three and half times. The West Bank, its' Biblical homeland -'Judea and Samaria -again in

our hands. Within six days, Israel and the M.E. have changed forever. Our fate now really ended up in our hands. Great opportunities. Hidden challenges. Infinite variety of options opened. Will we know what to do with them? , Only time will tell.